YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN ARMENIAN MEDIA AND ANALYSIS

Summary of Research Findings

Monitoring period: April 1-July 31, 2026

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PART A.
Research Objectives and the Principles for Grouping the Monitored Media Outlets and Experts

The project implemented by the Yerevan Press Club with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung seeks to examine how selected Armenian media outlets and members of the expert community portrayed international actors and geopolitical developments in the South Caucasus during the monitoring period.

For the purpose of aggregating and comparing the monitoring findings, media outlets and experts were classified according to their previously known or publicly expressed general positioning toward the policies of the incumbent government, using predefined criteria.

Three provisional analytical groups were distinguished:

- **Conditionally pro-government media outlets and experts/influencers:** those whose general positioning is supportive of government policies.
- **Conditionally opposition-oriented media outlets and experts/influencers:** those whose general positioning is critical of government policies.
- **Conditionally neutral media outlets and experts/influencers:** those that identify as neutral or, under the predefined classification criteria, do not maintain a consistently supportive or critical position.

The methodological questionnaire covers six themes and 36 specific questions. These address the roles of the United States, the European Union, Russia, Turkey, Iran and Georgia in the context of Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, Armenia's security, Armenia-EU rapprochement, regional security and the reopening of transport links.

The full methodology is provided at the end of this report.

PART B.
Summary Analysis of Six Thematic Areas across the Three Groups of Media Outlets and Experts

1. Thematic Analysis of Conditionally Pro-Government Media Outlets and Experts

1.1. Perceptions of the United States

The conditionally pro-government group openly supports deepening relations with the United States. In media broadcasts and expert publications, Washington is portrayed as a partner that gives new weight to Armenia's peace agenda and creates opportunities to reduce dependence on external powers. This position is particularly evident in coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, TRIPP and U.S. policy toward Armenia: positive assessments account for approximately 74% and 73%, respectively, in the latter two areas. Yet the group's discourse cannot be called unconditionally pro-American: the same people sometimes sharply criticize U.S. actions against Iran.

The peace process: Washington's mediation gains new significance
Approximately two-thirds of assessments of U.S. mediation are positive. Group's experts and media commentators believe that, following the Washington agreements of August 8, 2025, the peace process has moved beyond its earlier uncertainty. They argue that U.S. involvement raises the political and economic cost of renewed military action for Azerbaijan. In their view, Washington's advantage goes beyond its standing as a mediator: the United States has a direct interest in peace, investment and uninterrupted transport connections.

This interpretation is particularly clear when contrasted with Russia's earlier mediation. In discussions on 1in.am and in several expert publications, Russia is accused of wanting to manage rather than resolve the conflict, whereas Washington is seen as having a practical interest in reaching a settlement. More cautious voices are also present: U.S. support is not yet a mutual-defense treaty, and the durability of peace will depend on implementation of the agreements and Azerbaijan's conduct.

TRIPP: The opposite of the “Zangezur corridor”
TRIPP is among the group's most positively assessed subjects: almost three-quarters of assessments are positive, with only around 4% negative. Supporters see the project as an opportunity to open transport routes through Armenia, attract American investment and strengthen Armenia's position in the region. They emphasize not only the economic value of a new route but, crucially, who will control it.

In 1in.am's June discussions, speakers argue that TRIPP, operating under Armenian jurisdiction, overturns the logic of the extraterritorial “Zangezur corridor” promoted by Aliyev. In a May broadcast, the project is even presented as an opportunity to “change

the DNA” of Armenian statehood. These emphatic expressions show that TRIPP is assigned significance not only for the economy but also for sovereignty and security. Later sections will examine almost opposite interpretations of the same project as a threat.

Nonetheless, supporters also raise questions: Will the promised investment materialize? How will security and control be ensured? Could Iran's objections impede the project? A positive assessment therefore does not mean that all practical questions are believed to have been settled.

Strategic partnership with Armenia: Support coupled with expectations of tangible results

U.S. policy toward Armenia is praised primarily for strategic partnership, diplomatic engagement and the prospects for defense and technological cooperation. Many speakers and experts believe that a more active U.S. presence would free Armenia from its former dependence on a single center of power. For them, foreign-policy diversification is not an end in itself; it should broaden Armenia's opportunities in security, investment and international negotiations.

However, questions raised in H1 (the First Channel) discussions are more practical: What does a high-level visit actually deliver? When will announced projects turn into investment or tangible security outcomes? Such questions do not alter the generally positive attitude but show that the delivery of promises is also considered a measure of success.

U.S.-Iran confrontation: A clear limit to the positive attitude

Reservations about U.S. policy are most pronounced on Iran. Negative assessments (around 39%) substantially exceed positive ones (around 15%), while almost half of the references are neutral. Concerns center on Armenia's southern border, economic and energy ties with Iran, and the risk of a regional war.

One expert, who also supports U.S. mediation and TRIPP, calls American military actions against Iran a “very serious mistake” and an “adventure.” Another expert publication also describes them as “recklessness.” These assessments matter precisely because of the contrast: those who favor rapprochement with the United States do not necessarily endorse Washington's actions toward neighboring Iran.

U.S. relations with other countries

U.S. contacts with Azerbaijan do not inspire unequivocal confidence either: members of the group both hope that Washington can influence Baku and remain wary of separate U.S.-Azerbaijan arrangements. When discussing U.S. policy toward Russia, the EU, Turkey and Georgia, possible implications for Armenia often receive more attention than a simple positive or negative judgment. On elections, Western assistance is generally viewed as support for democratic development rather than direct interference.

1.2. Perceptions of the European Union

The group's position on the EU is more unified than its stance toward the United States. Some 82% of references to European policy toward Armenia are positive. The EU is

praised not only for diplomatic support: it is associated with access to European markets, political and administrative reforms, visa liberalization and the ability to withstand Russian economic pressure. If the United States is seen primarily as a partner in the peace process and TRIPP, the EU is regarded as a pillar of Armenia's long-term development and institutional change.

Peace and the European Union Mission in Armenia: Its presence on the border is seen as a concrete result

The group's media outlets and experts welcome the EU's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization. They value European political support, statements backing Armenia's territorial integrity and opportunities for development in border regions. They generally see the United States and the EU not as competing mediators but as playing complementary roles.

Support for the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) is particularly strong: approximately 84% of assessments are positive, with no negative assessments recorded. In 1in.am's June coverage, defenders of the mission emphasize that the presence of European observers has helped maintain stability along the border and protect soldiers' lives. This argument moves beyond abstract “European values”: the mission's usefulness is assessed in terms of its ability to deter possible escalation at the border.

At the same time, experts do not claim that civilian observers can replace Armenia's armed forces or defense partners.

The European choice: Markets, reforms and calls for faster action

In this discourse, economic rapprochement with the EU has become a question of Armenia's autonomy. 1in.am and FreeNews repeatedly link European markets, financial assistance and trade opportunities to reduced dependence on Russia. They pay particular attention to Global Gateway, easier access for Armenian exports, visa liberalization and the introduction of European standards. The European direction is also presented as an opportunity for more effective governance and stronger democratic institutions.

Yet experts in the group do not consider the government's steps sufficient. Individual publications call for a clear roadmap toward EU membership, faster institutional rapprochement and reduced dependence on Russian-led structures. 1in.am's June analysis also notes this distinction: some pro-Western speakers advocate more decisive steps, while government representatives defend a gradual approach. Support for European integration therefore does not always translate into approval of every government action.

The EU's other relationships and the election issue

EU-Azerbaijan relations are assessed more cautiously. On the one hand, speakers acknowledge the contribution of European economic cooperation with Baku to regional stability; on the other, they criticize possible inconsistency on human rights and peace arising from energy ties with Azerbaijan. The EU-Russia confrontation is not presented in uniformly positive terms either: negative-coded references predominate in coverage of EU policy toward Russia, but some concern the consequences of the conflict itself rather than disappointment with the EU.

Regarding elections, members of the group generally welcome EU assistance in countering hybrid threats, strengthening information security and reinforcing democratic institutions. They do not treat high-level Western officials' visits as electoral interference in themselves, while also noting how domestic political opponents interpret those visits. European policy toward Georgia and Turkey is discussed mainly in the context of regional transport links and the challenges of European integration.

1.3. Perceptions of Russia

Assessments of Russia are the most categorical. The group's experts and media commentators not only criticize particular Russian decisions but also challenge the very basis of Armenia's former alliance with Moscow. About 92% of assessments of Russia's role in ensuring Armenia's security are negative, as are about 81% of assessments of its policy toward Armenia. For these speakers, Russian influence is associated primarily with unfulfilled security promises, the use of economic dependence as a means of coercion, and the threat of domestic political interference.

A failure of security: Distrust of the word “ally”
Speakers repeatedly recall the 2020 war, the incursions into Armenian territory in 2021-2022, and the events in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. Their central question is straightforward: Where was Armenia's ally when security assistance was needed? In broadcasts on 1in.am and FreeNews, the inaction of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is portrayed not as a single failed decision but as a failure of the entire Russian-led security system.

Some assessments are exceptionally harsh. In one expert publication, Russia is described not as a guarantor of security but as the “number one existential threat to Armenia's national security.” This is not the language of the whole group, but it shows how deeply some speakers distrust the former ally. Even more moderate assessments arrive at the same practical demand: develop defense cooperation with other partners and reduce military dependence on Russia.

The peace process: Russia is seen as having an interest in keeping the conflict unresolved
Within this group, the positive view of U.S. mediation often has a negative Russian counterpart. Some argue that Moscow was interested in keeping the conflict unresolved because it provided leverage over Armenia and Azerbaijan. They cite the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and the displacement of its Armenian population as evidence of the failure of Russian peacekeepers and mediation.

They interpret Russia's criticism of the Washington agreements and TRIPP not as concern for regional security but as fear of losing its former control. In this reading, the peace agenda and foreign-policy diversification are parts of the same process. At the same time, individual reports acknowledge Russia's continuing regional influence and the fact that practical relations with Moscow cannot be eliminated by a single decision.

Economic pressure and the railway question: Dependence as leverage
Criticism of Russia becomes especially concrete in economic coverage. 1in.am, FreeNews and H1 discuss restrictions on imports of Armenian agricultural products, flowers, mineral water and other goods, difficulties at the Upper Lars crossing, and

threats concerning gas prices. Speakers link these measures to Armenia's rapprochement with Europe. In H1's July discussions, economic restrictions are characterized as an “economic cudgel.” This expression conveys the group's attitude more vividly than the label “negative assessment.”

The Russian railway concession also draws sharp criticism. Some experts in the group argue that the management of the South Caucasus Railway impedes the reopening of transport links and leaves Armenia as a “dead end” of regional transport routes. They propose reviewing or terminating the concession. Others warn that abruptly severing economic relations could also harm Armenia. The distinction matters: reducing dependence on Russia is a widely shared aim, but there is no agreement on the pace or method.

Russia's possible influence on elections

Discourse on possible Russian interference in the electoral process is also highly critical: approximately 89% of assessments are negative. Media speakers and experts claim that Russian official, information and business networks could support Armenian political forces, fund campaigning or influence the public agenda. Allegations also concern organized transportation of voters and vote-buying.

Allegations recorded during the monitored period must be distinguished from established facts. As public discourse, however, they reveal that for a substantial part of this group, Russia is not merely a foreign partner or rival but a potential actor capable of constraining Armenia's political autonomy from within. Economic coercion and information influence are therefore frequently discussed together as interconnected tools.

Upon summarizing the monitoring findings, these results were subsequently analyzed within focus groups in September and October. The integration of data across both stages of the research demonstrates a distinct evolution in the perception of Russian policy regarding Armenia. During Armenia's parliamentary election period (including the pre-election and post-election phases), Moscow's trade restrictions and criticism of Yerevan's foreign policy course were covered primarily in the context of Russia's influence on the electoral behavior of Armenian citizens.

In particular, within the conditionally pro-government and neutral segments of Armenia's information space, there was an expectation that Armenian-Russian relations would largely return to their usual course after the elections. Contrary to these expectations, the September-October focus group discussions suggest that Moscow's pressure and its disagreements with Yerevan are becoming systemic in nature, encompassing Armenia's rapprochement with the EU, Russia's military presence in the country, gas supplies, energy and transport infrastructure, and access for Armenian goods to Russian markets.

In other words, discussions of Russia's role have shifted considerably from a focus driven by immediate political circumstances towards a more substantive examination of specific issues.

1.4. Perceptions of Turkey

Experts and media commentators in this group are less likely to adopt unequivocal “for” or “against” positions on Turkey. Almost half the references to Turkish policy toward Armenia are neutral, while positive and negative assessments are close in number. Behind this picture lies a clear distinction: speakers want the border with Turkey to open but do not fully trust Ankara's policies.

The economic benefits of opening the border
Positive assessments focus on the border and the railway. In 1in.am and FreeNews discussions and several expert publications, reopening the Gyumri-Kars connection is seen as a practical opportunity to reach European markets and reduce regional isolation. It could also lessen reliance on particular transport routes controlled by Russia. Support for normalization with the neighbor is framed primarily in terms of Armenia's interests.

Yet some speakers and experts stress that discussing projects and actually opening the border are different things. They ask why previously discussed steps have not been implemented and how far the technical and political prerequisites have advanced. The positive attitude therefore reflects expectations of an opening, not unconditional approval of Turkey's current policies.

The Azerbaijan factor and persistent distrust
The main critical argument about Turkey is the link between Ankara's policies and Azerbaijan's positions. One expert makes this dependency especially pointed, calling Turkey a “hostage” to Azerbaijan's policy. Other assessments recall Ankara's support for Baku during the 2020 war and the prolonged delay in normalizing relations with Armenia.

Thus, the same group can support opening Armenia-Turkey transport links while criticizing Turkey's conditional approach. This is not an inconsistency but an attempt to separate the benefits of normalization from confidence in Ankara.

As the focus group discussions revealed, tensions between Baku and Ankara over restrictions on wearing the hijab in Azerbaijan attracted considerable attention in the media and expert community. One view expressed was that the disagreements had been triggered by Turkey 's intention to open its border with Armenia.

Nevertheless, the prevailing message in public discussions was that the temporary cooling of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations should not be given undue significance or regarded as a positive development for Yerevan. Most analysts and commentators maintained that disagreements between Armenia's neighbors could not be considered conducive to the country's foreign policy interests.

1.5. Perceptions of Iran

The group's attitude toward Iran is largely favorable yet cautious: approximately half the assessments of Iranian policy toward Armenia are positive, almost as many are neutral, and negative assessments are rare. Iran is portrayed as an important neighbor

with which energy, economic and border ties should be maintained and expanded, irrespective of growing partnerships with the United States and other international actors.

The southern border and the threat of war
Positive assessments of Iranian policy often relate to Tehran's statements on Armenia's territorial integrity and the inviolability of the Armenian-Iranian border. These are seen as important signals concerning Syunik and regional transport connections. Experts nevertheless emphasize that Iran pursues its own interests first and foremost, and that a neighbor's political support cannot substitute for Armenia's own security capabilities.

The U.S.-Iran military confrontation elicits a more anxious response. Speakers and experts worry that war could disrupt Armenia's southern economic connections, energy projects and new transit initiatives. This issue illustrates the group's approach especially clearly: partnership with the United States does not require supporting pressure on Iran.

Energy cooperation and compatibility with TRIPP
Members of the group welcome the “gas for electricity” arrangement with Iran, North-South transport links and border infrastructure. They see Iran not only as a neighbor but also as an important opportunity to diversify energy supplies and trade routes.

When discussing possible Iranian concerns about TRIPP, the prevailing approach is to preserve compatibility between the parties' interests. Some experts believe a route under Armenian control could also benefit Iranian freight traffic. Others warn that an American presence could create political tensions. Maintaining ties with Iran is therefore presented not as an alternative to the Western direction, but as a necessary element in balancing Armenia's diversified relationships.

1.6. Perceptions of Georgia

Georgia provokes relatively little debate in this group. Its policy toward Armenia is largely assessed as neutral or positive: approximately 52% of references are neutral and 44% positive. The central concern is straightforward: how to preserve vital Armenian transit connections without taking sides in the neighbor's internal and foreign-policy disputes.

An indispensable transit partner
Media commentators and experts see Georgia as one of Armenia's main gateways to the Black Sea and European markets. They welcome road and rail connections and opportunities for freight transport and trade. Criticism of transit costs, problems at Upper Lars and dependence on a limited number of routes usually does not become a negative political assessment of Georgia.

The peace process and regional competition
In Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, Georgia is mainly seen as a neighbor that would benefit from peace rather than as the principal mediator. New routes may change the region's transit map but could also expand overall opportunities for cooperation. Difficulties in Georgia-EU relations are sometimes compared with Armenia's European

prospects without treating the two countries' circumstances as identical. The overall approach is pragmatic: good-neighborly ties and safe transport links matter regardless of other regional disagreements.

Overall observation

In this group's discourse, international actors are assessed chiefly in terms of Armenia's sovereignty, security and foreign-policy options. Rapprochement with the United States and the EU is supported because it is seen as a path to peace, development and reduced dependence. Russia is criticized primarily for unmet security obligations, economic pressure and potential domestic political influence. Discussion of Iran, Turkey and Georgia concentrates more on concrete interests and risks associated with neighboring states.

2. Thematic Analysis of Conditionally Opposition-Oriented Media Outlets and Experts

2.1. Perceptions of the United States

Attitudes toward the United States within the conditionally opposition-oriented group are much more contradictory than criticism of the government's Western policy might suggest. In discussions on 24News, 168.am and 5TV, Washington's initiatives are often viewed with distrust, particularly when linked to peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, TRIPP and forthcoming elections. Nevertheless, some experts in the same group see the United States as a source of new opportunities for Armenia's security. There is therefore no uniform “anti-American” position here. Rather, speakers question U.S. policy objectives, the security guarantees it offers and the Armenian government's ability to use those opportunities.

Peace mediation: Distrust without rejecting American opportunities
Almost half of the assessments of the U.S. role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization are negative (39 out of 83), while approximately one-fifth are positive. Critics doubt Washington's willingness to assume real responsibility for Armenia's security. In their view, the United States is primarily interested in weakening Russian and Iranian influence, while the implementation of Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements and Azerbaijan's potential new demands remain uncertain. In 168.am and 24News broadcasts, promises of peace are therefore sometimes portrayed as a cover for additional pressure on Armenia.

The opposite view is also expressed within this group. One expert values the White House's mediating capacity, arguing that American involvement has at times restrained Azerbaijan's military ambitions. The expert criticizes not partnership with the United States but the Armenian authorities' insufficient use of Washington's influence. Another expert even advocates obtaining Major Non-NATO Ally status from the United States. Such views do not dominate the group's discourse but matter: criticism of the government's peace policy does not necessarily imply opposition to a U.S. security partnership.

TRIPP: From an economic route to a new name for the “Zangezur corridor”
The position on TRIPP is considerably clearer: 116 of 161 assessments-about 72%-are negative, and only seven are positive. Critics ask who actually benefits from the route, who will control it, and what guarantee exists that reopening transport links will not become a new instrument of Turkish-Azerbaijani pressure on Armenia. They contrast the project's economic promises with concerns over Syunik's security and preserving the border with Iran.

A participant in an April discussion on 168.am offered a vivid description: “They put LEVIS jeans on the Zangezur corridor and call it TRIPP.” A similar argument was expressed in a June 5TV broadcast: TRIPP is “the same Zangezur corridor” and could serve a “Greater Turan” project. These statements reveal the central contrast with the pro-government group: one side regards the road under Armenian jurisdiction as a way to neutralize demands for an extraterritorial corridor; the other sees the risk of implementing the same demands under a new guise.

Developments associated with U.S. involvement that could damage Armenia-Iran and Armenia-Russia relations are criticized as well. In 24News broadcasts in May, speakers expressed concern that a project involving the United States could turn Syunik into an arena of confrontation between major powers. One expert publication even describes TRIPP as an initiative that could disrupt the balance in the South Caucasus.

There are also exceptions within the group. One expert regards TRIPP as a potentially beneficial Armenian-American project, provided that Armenia retains full control over entry and exit and that any extraterritorial status is ruled out. This expert also criticizes the government but reaches the opposite conclusion: Armenia should make better use of American opportunities. Thus, the sharpest disagreement over TRIPP is not only about the project itself but about whether Armenia can strengthen or will instead lose its control through it.

Policy toward Armenia, Iran and elections
Within the opposition-oriented group, approximately 54% of assessments of U.S. policy toward Armenia are negative. Critics are particularly skeptical of high-level visits, strategic-partnership announcements and economic promises. On 5TV and 168.am, speakers often ask what Armenia will be left with if American attention or priorities change. One expert points to Trump's unpredictability with a sarcastic question: how can the “ever-changing Trump” guarantee Armenia's security for 99 years? At the same time, 5TV has welcomed U.S. congressional initiatives raising the release of Armenian prisoners and the right of displaced Artsakh Armenians to return.

Criticism of U.S. policy toward Iran is even stronger: 63% of assessments are negative. American military actions and pressure are examined chiefly in terms of risks to Armenia's southern borders, economic ties with Iran and the possibility of regional war. This caution concerning Iran overlaps with some pro-government concerns, but in opposition discourse it more often becomes part of a broader critique of TRIPP and Armenia's Western orientation. U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan and Turkey is also often judged in light of the perceived absence of real pressure on Baku and the possibility of deals among regional powers.

Assessments of potential U.S. electoral influence are particularly harsh: 55 of 74 references-approximately 74%-are negative. On 24News and 5TV, a number of speakers regard visits by U.S. officials and positive remarks about the incumbent authorities as political support ahead of elections. In the pro-government group, the same contacts are often interpreted as support for Armenia's democratic development and foreign-policy choice.

2.2. Perceptions of the European Union

The opposition-oriented group's discourse on the EU is more consistently critical than its discourse on the United States. Of 291 assessments of European policy toward Armenia, 198-or about 68%-are negative. However, the dispute is not solely about choosing “Europe or Russia.” Many media commentators and experts doubt that Europe can deliver to Armenia what is promised during official visits and discussions on funding and security. Others criticize the EU not for its geopolitical role but for failing to adhere consistently to its professed values.

Peace and EUMA: Observers' presence is not seen as a sufficient guarantee
Negative assessments account for nearly 69% of references to the EU's mediating role and about 64% of references to EUMA. Discussions on 168.am and 24News criticize the assumption that European diplomatic support alone can deter Azerbaijan's use of force. Some connect agreements reached in Prague and other European venues with the weakening of Armenia's position on Artsakh. European observers are also accused of lacking the practical ability to prevent border incidents.

In an April 168.am report, EUMA is even described as “a new headache.” This contrasts with pro-government discourse, which sees the mission's presence as a tangible deterrent to border tensions. The question posed in the opposition-oriented group is different: if civilian observers cannot provide military protection, to what extent could they replace Armenia's previous security arrangements? Nevertheless, the group broadly welcomes resolutions adopted in European institutions against Azerbaijan and public criticism of Ilham Aliyev by European officials.

European integration: The accusation of “selling hope”
Media commentators and experts critical of rapprochement with the EU argue that Armenia's economy is not ready for rapid entry into European markets and that official promises are exaggerated. In 5TV's June discussions, symbolic initiatives to export to Europe are mocked as “European photo opportunities with seven apricots.” Other participants say Armenian citizens are being given “false hopes” or offered a “soft pillow” to rest their heads on. Their sarcasm is not only about the European market: critics use it to argue that Armenia's authorities present foreign policy as a success without explaining its economic costs or feasibility.

Considerable attention also goes to the risks of potentially leaving the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), losing the Russian market, higher gas prices and agricultural exports. In 24News reports from May, EU economic offers are portrayed as inadequate substitutes for the Russian market and energy connections. At the same time, one expert who strongly criticizes the government's European policy proposes deeper free-trade arrangements with the EU and a strategy for exporting agricultural products to

European markets. This shows that criticism of the European direction is not always a rejection of economic rapprochement.

Relations with Azerbaijan and electoral influence

Within opposition discourse, EU-Azerbaijan relations are criticized especially for prioritizing energy interests. According to media commentators and experts, European institutions speak of human rights and peace principles but follow a different logic in their dealings with Baku. Some experts therefore demand a clearer EU position on Armenian prisoners, the rights of Artsakh Armenians and pressure on Azerbaijan. This demand partly overlaps with reservations expressed in the pro-government group, although here it leads to more general doubts about the credibility of European policy.

The sharpest contrast again arises in domestic politics. Of 130 assessments of the EU's influence on Armenian elections, 109-about 84%-are negative. In 24News broadcasts, visits by European officials are described as “pre-election bonuses” for the incumbent authorities; 168.am criticizes European institutions for their silence regarding alleged abuses by the government. Pro-government discourse generally connects EU support with democracy and resistance to hybrid threats, whereas in this group it is often seen as support for one side in an electoral contest.

EU policy toward Russia is also assessed predominantly negatively within the opposition-oriented group. Media commentators and experts warn that a deepening Europe-Russia confrontation could create additional economic and security risks for Armenia. EU policy toward Georgia and Turkey is more often considered in the context of regional developments and the feasibility of European integration than as a separate central topic.

At the same time, as participants in the focus group discussions noted, the opposition segment of the information space distinguishes between the EU's geopolitical role in the region, which is viewed negatively, and, as discussed above, the positive assessment of documents adopted by European institutions concerning Armenians convicted in Baku and the right of Karabakh Armenians to return.

The opposition also expressed particular approval of the critical findings in the report of international observers - the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) mission - on Armenia's parliamentary elections, published in late September.

2.3. Perceptions of Russia

Differences within the opposition-oriented group are especially consequential when it comes to Russia. Unlike the almost uniformly critical pro-government discourse, this group includes both demands to preserve security and economic ties with Moscow and fierce criticism of Russian policy. Most references to Russian policy toward Armenia are neutral (236 of 393), while positive and negative assessments are relatively close. However, the prevalence of neutral coding does not signify unqualified support for Russia: many reports describe Armenia's dependence, Russian pressure or practical constraints on the relationship without reaching an unequivocally positive or negative conclusion.

Security: An “indispensable ally” and unmet obligations

Of 163 assessments of Russia's role in Armenia's security, 71 are positive, 40 negative and 52 neutral. In 5TV's June broadcasts, some speakers regard Russia as Armenia's genuine strategic ally and warn that distancing the country from the CSTO or the Russian security system without a comparable alternative could intensify pressure from Azerbaijan and Turkey. Their main argument is that Armenia's security cannot rest on Western promises that have not yet materialized.

But the group also contains sharply opposing views. One expert regards Russia as the main threat to Armenia's sovereignty and calls for immediate withdrawal from the CSTO, EAEU and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Another recalls the inaction of Russian peacekeepers during the blockade of Artsakh and the 2023 military operations, as well as unmet commitments to Armenia in 2021-2022. In a May 5TV report, a speaker even called the Russian presence a “deadly embrace.” These voices demonstrate that the group's broadly critical stance toward the government does not translate into a uniform favorable view of Russia.

The peace process and security in the South Caucasus

Russia's influence on Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization is viewed in different ways. Some argue that Moscow's participation should be maintained as an element of the regional balance of power; others accuse it of deals with Azerbaijan and failure to honor obligations under the November 9, 2020 statement. Experts who criticize the displacement of Artsakh Armenians in particular reject the claim that a Russian presence would automatically protect Armenian interests.

At the same time, favorable assessments of Russia outnumber negative ones on regional security overall-62 of 104. This mainly reflects the view that Russia retains military, political and geographic influence that cannot be ignored when designing a new security arrangement. For some experts, recognizing the absence of an immediate alternative to Russia's actual military presence does not amount to justifying Moscow's past policies.

Policy toward Armenia: Dependence as both protection and a source of pressure

Discussions on 24News, 168.am and 5TV frequently warn about the consequences of sharply worsening economic ties with Russia. The Russian market, gas supplies, EAEU membership and freight transport through Upper Lars are presented as systems that remain vital to Armenia's economy. According to this view, the government is jeopardizing existing opportunities without having replacement markets or comparable security guarantees. Some media commentators and experts interpret Russian officials' economic warnings as predictable consequences of Yerevan's actions.

The same sources, however, also report Russian restrictions on Armenian agricultural products, difficulties at Lars and statements about possible gas price increases. One expert condemns these pressures, another criticizes the Armenian government's lack of preparedness to withstand them. Thus the reality of Armenia's economic dependence on Russia leads to two different conclusions: one side urges maintaining the relationship, while another advocates freeing the country more rapidly from Moscow's leverage.

Elections and external influence
Neutral assessments predominate within the opposition-oriented group on Russia's possible electoral influence: 96 of 130. Unlike pro-government discourse, alleged Russian interference does not itself become the central critical theme. Instead, speakers more often question government allegations about “pro-Russian forces” or Russian interference, discuss statements by Russian officials and compare them with activity by Western countries.

At the same time, a number of experts on the group's various platforms do not deny the possibility of Russian influence over Armenia's domestic political life. The disagreement concerns what constitutes proven interference and what amounts to unfounded allegations deployed in domestic political competition. Thus, a “neutral” assessment in election-related coverage often reflects commentary on the allegations, not categorical acceptance or rejection of Russian involvement.

Transport connections: The argument for preserving existing links
Of 84 assessments of Russia's role in reopening regional transport links, 35 are positive and 19 negative. Discussions emphasize existing railway systems, connections with Russia and the possible reopening of the railway through Abkhazia. In April, 5TV presented that railway as an alternative trade and transit route. Some speakers doubt that TRIPP can replace existing economic ties, while others criticize the Russian concession for operating Armenia's railway.

Russia's relations with Azerbaijan, Turkey, the United States, the EU and Georgia are also discussed mainly in the context of Armenia's security choices. Moscow's deals with Baku sometimes attract sharp criticism, while Russian-Turkish cooperation is interpreted as a possible risk of bypassing Armenian interests. Recognition of Russian influence on these issues does not eliminate reservations about its policies.

2.4. Perceptions of Turkey

Turkey is the actor assessed most unequivocally negatively within the opposition-oriented group. Of 181 assessments of Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, 171-about 94%-are negative. Negative assessments of Turkish policy toward Armenia account for approximately 87%. This creates a striking contrast with the pro-government group, which often views normalization with Turkey as an economic and transport opportunity, albeit with reservations.

The peace process: Turkey is not seen as an independent mediator
In discussions on 168.am and 5TV, speakers argue that Ankara follows Azerbaijan's priorities in its relations with Armenia. They contrast promises to open the border, establish diplomatic relations and unblock transport links with the continued border closure, Azerbaijani demands for constitutional changes and Turkey's support for Azerbaijan. In this discourse, the delay in Armenia-Turkey normalization is more than a diplomatic setback: it is presented as a means of pressuring Armenia and extracting further concessions.

Speakers also frequently invoke historical memory: the Armenian Genocide, the blockade of Armenia and Turkey's role in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. In this context, even the word “peace” sometimes becomes contested: some opposition-oriented

speakers believe normalization cannot be built on ignoring historical and ongoing threats. One expert takes an entirely different historical-legal approach, arguing that Armenia's legal claims and questions of historical borders cannot be excluded from the agenda. This is among the group's more categorical positions and does not characterize every source.

Policy toward Armenia: Opening economic opportunities or creating new dependencies?

Criticism of TRIPP is a natural extension of attitudes toward Turkey. In 5TV and 168.am broadcasts, the project is linked to a Turkish-Azerbaijani territorial connection, claims over Syunik and the idea of “Greater Turan.” Some 24News speakers warn that promises to open transport links with Turkey might entail new political commitments for Armenia without commensurate guarantees. Rather than discussing economic benefits alone, they insist on answers about the terms under which the border would open and the extent of Armenia's freedom in future decisions.

This pronounced distrust of Turkish policy must nevertheless be distinguished from outright rejection of all economic and diplomatic ties. Individual reports discuss trade, transport and the possibility of future reconciliation. These are simply not regarded as grounds for a positive assessment of Turkey's current policy. The group's central question is whether Armenia can normalize relations without making new concessions at the expense of security and political autonomy.

2.5. Perceptions of Iran

Iran is among the neighbors portrayed most positively in the opposition-oriented group. About 59% of assessments of Iran's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization, and about 53% of its policy toward Armenia, are positive. Negative assessments are very rare in both cases. Yet this attitude is better understood as appreciation of Iran's interest in protecting Armenia's southern border and the regional balance, rather than unconditional support for every move by Tehran.

The southern border and the security of Syunik

In discussions on 24News and 168.am, Iran's categorical statements against changes to regional borders are seen as a deterrent to Azerbaijan and Turkey. Experts note that the land connection with Armenia is also a vital strategic interest for Iran. This convergence of interests leads them to argue that Armenia should make more active use of the Iranian direction, particularly in negotiations over Syunik's security and the terms of regional transport links.

Iran is also valued as an energy, transport and economic partner. Some group members believe that neglecting this relationship makes Armenia more vulnerable amid U.S.-Iran confrontation and Turkish-Azerbaijani pressure. Another expert perspective links Iran's potential role as an ally to its domestic political future, while some of Tehran's votes in international forums are openly criticized. Thus, the favorable overall picture does not erase specific reservations about Iranian policy.

Iran and TRIPP: The second axis of disagreement between groups

The Iranian factor often becomes decisive in assessments of TRIPP. In the pro-government group, supporters emphasize that opening transport links under Armenian

jurisdiction could be compatible with Iran's interests. By contrast, many opposition-oriented discussions ask whether Tehran would perceive a long-term American presence in Syunik as a threat. This is a central argument against the project in 24News coverage from May and 5TV coverage from June.

Thus, favorable attitudes toward Iran bring the two opposing groups together to some degree, yet lead to different conclusions on TRIPP and Armenia's Western partnerships. One side seeks to reconcile American and Iranian opportunities, while the other sees a dangerous contradiction between them.

2.6. Perceptions of Georgia

The opposition-oriented group's discourse on Georgia is considerably more restrained. Of 56 references to Georgia's policy toward Armenia, 41 are neutral; only four references address Georgia's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization. It is therefore difficult to identify a stable, pronounced positive or negative position.

Georgia is mainly seen as an essential neighbor and transit partner providing connections to Russia, the Black Sea and foreign markets. In April discussions on 5TV, for instance, the potential reopening of the railway through Abkhazia is presented as an alternative route for regional trade. The practical importance of the Georgian direction is also highlighted in 168.am reports. At the same time, some speakers use Georgia's difficulties with European integration as an illustration of risks in Armenia's foreign-policy choices.

On Georgia, disagreements between the opposition-oriented and pro-government groups are smaller than on the United States, the EU or Turkey. Its importance is recognized from different perspectives; the principal debate concerns the preferred ways to develop Armenia's transit and regional connections.

Participants in the focus group discussions highlighted differences in how various segments of Armenia's information space assessed Georgia's domestic political situation.

In opposition media, Tbilisi's foreign policy was presented as an example of a balanced, independent approach to international partners, particularly Russia, grounded in national sovereignty-an approach that, according to these assessments, official Yerevan had either failed or been unwilling to achieve.

The conditionally neutral segment emphasized the importance of synchronizing the development of Georgia-EU and Armenia-EU relations. Meanwhile, the pro-government segment included suggestions that Armenian diplomacy was making efforts to restore understanding between Tbilisi and the West.

Summary

The conditionally opposition-oriented group most often assesses international actors by asking what real guarantees they offer Armenia and what political price cooperation entails. Criticism of TRIPP, distrust of the EU's economic promises and negative perceptions of Turkish policy are the clearest expressions of this approach. Initiatives

presented by the pro-government group as new opportunities are often seen here as uncertain security commitments or additional instruments of influence over Armenia.

3. Thematic Analysis of Conditionally Neutral Media Outlets and Experts

The discourse of the conditionally neutral group is neither indifferent nor balanced on every issue. Cooperation with the United States and the EU is often supported, Russia's security policy is predominantly criticized, and relations with Turkey are approached cautiously. The main distinction lies in the nature of the discussion: Azatutyun and Factor TV present opposing perspectives, while some experts defend the government's foreign-policy decisions even more decisively and others question their rationale. For this reason, the group's predefined “neutral” designation should not be confused with the assessments expressed during monitoring.

3.1. United States: Support for partnership, but not unconditional trust

Peace mediation and TRIPP

Within the group, support for U.S. mediation and deeper relations with Armenia outweighs opposition: 63% of assessments concerning Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization and 70% of assessments of U.S. policy toward Armenia are positive. Some media commentators and experts see Washington's activity as an opportunity to end Russia's former monopoly over mediation. Others, however, ask how far American involvement will serve Armenia's interests and what will remain of the partnership if Washington's priorities change.

TRIPP brings out this contrast particularly clearly. Positive assessments account for 53%, while nearly 40% are neutral. Supporters see it as an opportunity to unblock transport links, attract investment and maintain Armenian control. One expert argues that the project enjoys bipartisan support in Washington but immediately adds: “Without the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border, TRIPP's overall effectiveness is at risk.” Supporting the project, in other words, is not the same as believing its economic results are guaranteed.

The group also includes much harsher criticism. Another expert argues that “the Trump Route is an agreement more between the United States and Azerbaijan than between the United States and Armenia.” The expert considers its presentation as a guarantee of peace part of pre-election campaigning. In Factor TV's July discussions, alongside speakers describing the project's advantages, a view was expressed that it could serve to push Russia and Iran out of the South Caucasus. These are individual critical assessments, not the group's overall conclusion.

In July, Azatutyun reported important details behind the disagreement: U.S. clarifications about Armenian customs and border jurisdiction, Azerbaijan's continued use of the name “Zangezur corridor,” and Iran's concerns. Thus, the TRIPP debate

within this group concerns not only the road but also control over it, its beneficiaries and its security consequences.

Policy toward Iran and electoral influence
The generally favorable attitude toward the United States does not extend to its policy on Iran. Positive assessments of that subject are rare; neutral and negative references predominate. Media commentators and experts criticize military escalation and sanctions, fearing damage to Armenia's southern transport connections and energy opportunities.

The issue of possible U.S. electoral influence is also mixed: 21 assessments are positive, 10 negative and 22 neutral. In Azatutyun's coverage, American political contacts are interpreted by some as strengthening Armenia's democratic and security partnership and by others as an attempt to support the incumbent authorities. The visibility of this disagreement is characteristic of the group.

3.2. European Union: Support for the European direction, coupled with demands for results

Cooperation with Armenia and EUMA
Some 65% of assessments of EU policy toward Armenia are positive. Many media commentators and experts see European integration, economic assistance, visa liberalization and access to European markets as opportunities to strengthen Armenia's autonomy. Some experts even complain that the government is moving too slowly toward Europe. Such criticism can hardly be called anti-European: they simply demand clearer steps and tangible results.

Assessments of EUMA are even clearer: 31 out of 40 references are positive. One expert describes the observation mission as one of the most important “miracle” instruments for preserving Armenian statehood. Other discussions stress that civilian observers help deter border tensions but cannot replace military defense. These two propositions are not necessarily contradictory.

European support or electoral advantage?
Support for the EU does not eliminate dissatisfaction with it. In Azatutyun's July reports, business representatives note that accessing European markets remains difficult because of standards and visas, while opposition speakers accuse EU officials of selective attitudes toward government conduct in Armenia. Factor TV likewise presents reservations about the EU's capacity and energy interests in Azerbaijan alongside the positive picture.

Assessments of the EU's electoral influence are more sharply divided: 39 positive and 18 negative. Some connect EU assistance with safeguarding elections and countering foreign disinformation; others suspect that these initiatives could give the incumbents a political advantage. This disagreement matters: approval of rapprochement with the EU does not imply approval of every domestic political step taken by European institutions.

3.3. Russia: Harsh criticism, but differing visions of future relations

Security commitments and political pressure
Attitudes toward Russia in the neutral group are much more negative than the term “neutral” might suggest. Some 86% of assessments of its role in Armenia's security and 80% of its policy toward Armenia are negative. Most media speakers and experts criticize Russia and the CSTO for their conduct in the context of attacks on Armenia and the displacement of Artsakh Armenians.

Azatutyun also covers Russia's economic leverage: restrictions on Armenian goods, difficulties at Upper Lars and threats involving gas prices. In July, particular attention is paid to the Russian concession for operating Armenia's railway. One expert sees it as an obstacle to investment in transport. Another, while criticizing Russia's regional policy, warns that complete disengagement from Russia without viable alternatives could turn Armenia into an arena of confrontation among other powers.

Thus, criticism of Russian policy is almost universal, but views differ on how dependence should be reduced. Some call for rapid severance of security and economic ties, while others favor a more carefully managed transition.

Elections and regional transport connections
Some 88% of assessments of Russia's influence on elections to Armenia's National Assembly are negative. Media commentators and experts discuss Russian information influence, possible support for domestic political forces and propaganda pressure. However, the same outlets also air views questioning whether these allegations are well founded and whether they are used for political purposes.

On transport links, too, criticism focuses especially on Russian management of the railway and attempts to control new projects. Reducing Russia's influence may be seen favorably, but the practical cost-including dependence on existing routes and markets-remains a matter of debate.

3.4. Turkey: The benefits of opening the border are recognized, but Ankara's promises are distrusted

Neutral assessments are most common regarding Turkish policy toward Armenia, accounting for 51%, while negative ones make up 42%. Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization is judged more critically: 45 of 78 references are negative. Media commentators and experts complain that Ankara continues to link the opening of the border to Baku's demands.

In Azatutyun's July coverage, normalization is described as a process “marking time”: previously agreed steps have not been carried out. Yet the same reports discuss work to preserve monuments at Ani, business contacts and plans to restore the railway. An especially human contradiction emerges: some freight operators distrust Turkey politically but do not deny the economic gains of opening the border.

Experts' views on social media also diverge. Some regard reopening the border as a way to reduce Armenia's economic isolation; others warn that without the removal of

preconditions, the process could turn into unilateral concessions. What emerges is a desire for normalization combined with distrust of how it will be implemented.

3.5. Iran: An important partner, with the risks of war kept in view

Positive and neutral assessments of Iranian policy toward Armenia are almost equal, numbering 52 and 49 respectively; only four are negative. The group's experts emphasize the importance of the border with Iran, energy cooperation and the country's role as a southern transport route.

In Azatutyun's July reports, a proposal to expand Iranian gas supplies is presented as “very good news” for reducing Armenia's energy dependence. At the same time, journalists point out that the Armenian segment of the Armenia-Iran gas pipeline is controlled by a Russian company. Factor TV discussions likewise portray Iran as an important neighbor, but the escalation of U.S.-Iran confrontation is considered a risk to both energy projects and implementation of TRIPP.

Thus, the generally positive attitude toward Iran does not amount to justifying all its actions. What matters most is how these developments affect Armenia's security and economy.

According to additional assessments expressed during the focus group discussions, in September-October, conditionally neutral media outlets and the social media profiles of relatively neutral opinion leaders were more likely than other segments of Armenia's information space to criticize statements by Iranian officials declaring the construction of TRIPP unacceptable.

In the opposition segment, by contrast, these statements were used as grounds for questioning the rationale and feasibility of the “Trump Route”. Meanwhile, optimism about the possibility of reaching an agreement with Tehran on this issue prevailed in the pro-government segment.

3.6. Georgia: A necessary partner, alongside practical grievances

Georgia receives relatively little discussion. Of 70 references to its policy toward Armenia, 41 are neutral and 20 positive. Georgia is mainly seen as a transit route for Armenian freight toward international markets and as a desirable partner for regional transport connections.

This pragmatic view leaves no room for idealization, however. In Azatutyun's July reporting, Armenian freight operators complain about lengthy checks at Georgian border crossings and unequal competition. One expert also argues that existing transit opportunities through Georgia complicate assessments of the economic viability of new routes. Political sympathies are secondary here: the key questions are the reliability and actual cost of transport connections for Armenia.

As the focus group discussions revealed, in September-October, Armenia's information space devoted some attention, albeit limited, to disagreements between Azerbaijan and Georgia over cultural heritage.

The issue was generally covered in the context of tensions that emerged between Yerevan and Baku following a visit to Karabakh by foreign diplomats organized by the Azerbaijani authorities on September 11-12.

These developments were portrayed as an unacceptable trend towards Azerbaijani dominance in the region, including in matters concerning the interpretation of history and the attribution of historical and cultural monuments.

Summary

The conditionally neutral group clearly supports many aspects of the U.S. and European partnerships while sharply criticizing Russian security policy. Yet even the same initiative may elicit fundamentally different assessments: TRIPP as an opportunity for sovereignty or a deal between external powers; EU support as a pillar of security and development or an instrument of political influence. What distinguishes the group is not indifference but the coexistence of different arguments and opposing positions.

PART C.
Changes in Media Positions and Thematic Emphases, April-July 2026

The number of monitored units remained relatively stable throughout the period, rising somewhat in May before returning to levels close to those of earlier months.

Number of monitored units

Media outlet	Month				Total
	April	May	June	July	
1in.am	48	39	43	30	160
24News.am	39	31	29	24	123
168.am	37	38	33	24	132
Azatutyun.am	87	109	75	62	333
Factor.am	34	33	33	31	131
FreeNews.am	116	114	128	123	481
1TV.am (Public Television of Armenia, First Channel (H1))	92	167	117	104	480
5TV.am (Fifth Channel)	126	149	118	119	512
Total	**579**	**680**	**576**	**517**	**2352**

The monthly monitoring findings show that the basic positions of the three media groups largely persisted throughout the period. Nevertheless, noteworthy changes occurred in some subjects, in the tenor of assessments, the intensity of coverage and the arguments used.

1. Some moderation of criticism toward Turkey

In pro-government media, the share of negative assessments of Turkey's policy toward Armenia fell from 32% in April to 11% in June, then stood at 18% in July. In the neutral group, it declined from 67% to 47%. Negative assessments continued to dominate in opposition-oriented media, although their share fell from 97% in April to 81% in July.

These shifts partly reflect declining attention to the subject. The number of references fell from 75 to 43 in the opposition-oriented group and from 27 to 17 in the neutral group. Much of the latter decline is attributable to reduced coverage by Azatutyun, while the number of negative assessments on Factor TV changed very little.

The substance of coverage also shifted. H1's reports in May-June devoted more attention to the Gyumri-Kars railway, restoration of the Ani bridge, opening the border and potential business cooperation. By contrast, Azatutyun emphasized in July that normalization had still not produced a practical decision to open the border.

The partial softening of assessments of Turkey therefore cannot be interpreted entirely as a change of position. Shifts in thematic emphasis and the volume and composition of coverage also contributed to it.

2. Growing positive assessments of the EU

The proportion of positive assessments of EU policy toward Armenia rose from 80% in April to 90% in July in the pro-government group, and from 51% to 72% in the neutral group. By contrast, predominantly negative assessments persisted in the opposition-oriented group throughout the period.

The change in the neutral group is particularly noteworthy because positive assessments increased both on Azatutyun and on Factor TV. July coverage paid greater attention to EU economic assistance, export opportunities and reducing dependence on the Russian market.

At the same time, Azatutyun reported practical obstacles to accessing European markets, while Factor TV also carried criticism of European policy.

Thus, a more favorable view of the economic opportunities associated with EU cooperation is evident, but this does not mean that neutral media outlets have changed their broader political positioning.

3. Intensifying criticism of Russia

The share of negative assessments of Russian policy toward Armenia rose from 67% in April to 81% in July in pro-government media, and from 73% to 90% in the neutral group.

This development was accompanied by a shift in the substance of coverage. Criticism of Russia's failure to fulfill security obligations was present throughout the monitoring period, but from May to July greater attention was also paid to economic pressure, import restrictions on Armenian goods, problems at Upper Lars and control over Armenia's railway infrastructure.

In H1, FreeNews and Azatutyun reports, Russian economic restrictions were often portrayed as a means of countering Armenia's foreign-policy diversification.

Assessments of Russia remained more varied in opposition-oriented media, with predominantly neutral coverage and greater emphasis on the importance of maintaining security and economic ties.

4. Continued polarization over TRIPP

The main positions of the groups on TRIPP did not change substantially.

Positive assessments continued to prevail in the pro-government group, accounting for 77% in April, 74% in June and 63% in July. In the opposition-oriented group, negative assessments reached 94% in June before falling to 63% in July, mainly because the share of neutral references increased.

The contrast is apparent in the arguments as well. In 1in.am's June reports, TRIPP was presented as a project that could strengthen Armenian sovereignty and create new economic opportunities. In 5TV's June broadcasts, by contrast, it was associated with the “Zangezur corridor” and “Greater Turan” ideas and presented as a security threat to Armenia.

The neutral group continued to consider both the project's economic opportunities and its security and geopolitical risks.

Thus, the intensity of discussion and some emphases changed, but the principal opposing interpretations of TRIPP persisted.

5. Greater attention to possible Russian electoral influence

In the pro-government group, references to Russia's possible influence on elections to Armenia's National Assembly increased from 59 in April to 90 in May and 92 in June, then declined to 50 in July.

H1 and FreeNews devoted significant attention in May-June to Russian information influence, potential support for opposition forces and allegations of interference in electoral processes.

The volume of coverage was more stable in the neutral group, where negative assessments nonetheless also predominated. Neutral coverage was more common in the opposition-oriented group, alongside criticism of possible electoral influence by Western partners.

The difference reflects not only attitudes toward external actors but also which forms of foreign influence each group most often portrays as threats to Armenia's electoral process.

6. Overall conclusion

The core political orientations of media outlets remained relatively stable between April and July 2026, although significant changes were recorded on certain topics.

The most notable shifts were rising positive assessments of the EU, stronger criticism of Russia and some moderation in coverage of Turkey. At the same time, the main opposing narratives about TRIPP persisted, while the subject of possible Russian electoral influence was particularly active in May and June.

Overall, the changes concern not only whether assessments were positive or negative but also how media attention was distributed and which arguments were used to justify positions. Consequently, shifts in percentages do not always reflect a real change in an outlet's stance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Quantitative Scope of the Monitoring

Monitoring of Eight Media Outlets

News and socio-political programs from eight media outlets selected in the 2026 methodological document were monitored. The selection criteria included political positioning, audience size and influence, geographic distribution and the level of coverage of election-related issues. The sample is purposive and does not offer a statistically representative picture of the entire media landscape.

Media outlet	April	May	June	July	Total
5TV.am (Fifth Channel)	126	149	118	119	512
FreeNews.am	116	114	128	123	481
1TV.am (Public Television of Armenia, First Channel (H1))	92	167	117	104	480
Azatutyun.am	87	109	75	62	333
1in.am	48	39	43	30	160
168.am	37	38	33	24	132
Factor.am	34	33	33	31	131
24News.am	39	31	29	24	123
Total	**579**	**694**	**576**	**503**	**2352**

According to the consolidated monitoring records, 2,352 thematic materials were registered over the four months, averaging 588 per month. The highest number was recorded in May (694) and the lowest in July (503).

Monitoring of Publications by Eighteen Experts/Influencers

Facebook posts by 18 experts were examined in parallel.

The experts' thematic references totaled 865. The combined number of thematic references by media outlets and experts was therefore 3,217.

B. Methodological Framework of the Monitoring

Definition of the Sample and Unit of Analysis
For media monitoring, the units of analysis were individual television news reports-including the presenter's introduction-and complete political or debate programs. Commercial and public-service advertisements, sponsored content, announcements and scrolling news tickers were excluded.

For experts, the selected individuals' Facebook posts were examined.

Quantitative Coding
The coding tables record the number of references to each topic and, for the thematic rows, the tone of the references as positive (+), negative (−) or neutral (0). The same item may address more than one question.

Expert Focus Group Discussions
Expert focus group discussions involving specialists in international relations, regional security and the media were organized to supplement and update the monitoring findings. The discussions made it possible to revisit and clarify observed trends in light of the dynamics of regional and international developments and to enrich the qualitative interpretation of the monitoring results.

Media Outlets' and Experts' Positioning toward Government Policies
To aggregate and compare the findings, media outlets and experts were classified according to their previously known or publicly expressed general positioning toward the policies of the incumbent government, using predefined criteria. Three provisional analytical groups were identified:

- **Conditionally pro-government media outlets and experts/influencers:** generally supportive of government policies.
- **Conditionally opposition-oriented media outlets and experts/influencers:** generally critical of government policies.
- **Conditionally neutral media outlets and experts/influencers:** those who identify as neutral or do not have a consistently supportive or critical positioning under the predefined criteria.

This classification is independent of the assessments recorded during monitoring. Accordingly, belonging to a particular group does not mean that its members expressed uniform positions throughout the period under review. For example, a conditionally neutral expert may support certain government foreign-policy decisions, while a conditionally pro-government expert may criticize them.

The classification does not imply party affiliation, identical political views or a uniform attitude toward all government decisions. It is an analytical grouping device, while the positions expressed during monitoring constitute findings in their own right.

In this analysis, the three groups are used to compare perceptions and assessments of international actors and to identify similarities and differences between prior positioning and the views actually expressed.

Key Features of Media Discourse by Analytical Group

Conditionally pro-government media outlets	
1in.am	Journalists and invited speakers generally portray Western integration, TRIPP and the diversification of the government's foreign policy positively. Their criticism of Russia and the CSTO also aligns with official policy.
FreeNews.am	Assessments by journalists and speakers generally coincide with the official foreign-policy line on Western integration, TRIPP and criticism of Russia. Some speakers expect or even demand more decisive steps than those taken by the government.
1TV.am (Public Television of Armenia, First Channel (H1))	The general framing of news reports presents the government's main foreign-policy directions positively. Interviews also raise opposition and public concerns, but the critical nature of some questions appears more like a presentational technique designed to show different sides of an issue.
Conditionally neutral media outlets	
Azatutyun.am	Government, opposition and independent speakers present differing positions, and debates feature opposing views. At the same time, journalistic reports often place Western integration in a positive context and Russian policy in a critical one.
Factor.am	Programs include views supporting and criticizing official policy. In May, journalists' questions showed greater alignment with the government's foreign-policy approach, but this does not characterize the outlet's orientation throughout the full monitoring period.
Conditionally opposition-oriented media outlets	
24News.am	Not only invited speakers but also presenters generally portray government foreign policy from a critical perspective. Official arguments are often raised to challenge or refute them.
168.am	Journalistic framing and speakers' discourse are dominated by criticism of the government's peace policy, Western security guarantees and TRIPP, at times in an accusatory tone.
5TV.am (Fifth Channel)	Journalistic framing and invited speakers' discourse are dominated by criticism of the government's Western orientation, TRIPP and its relations with Russia. Some individual subjects nonetheless show points of agreement with official policy.

Appendix

All Monitored Media Outlets

April 1 - July 31, 2026

Total number of monitored units	**2352**

Themes		**Total number of references**	**Tone of the references**		
			+	**-**	**+**
1.	**Perceptions of the United States in Armenian public discourse**				
1.1.	How is the U.S. role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	300	145	70	85
1.2.	How is the Trump Route / TRIPP project portrayed?	380	159	127	94
1.3.	How is U.S. policy toward Armenia portrayed?	420	196	115	109
1.4.	How is U.S. policy toward Iran portrayed?	494	34	256	204
1.5.	How is U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	81	10	38	33
1.6.	How is U.S. policy toward Georgia portrayed?	15	5	4	6
1.7.	How is U.S. policy toward Turkey portrayed?	59	9	18	32
1.8.	How is U.S. policy toward Russia portrayed?	196	8	85	103
1.9.	How is U.S. policy toward the EU portrayed?	102	17	39	46
1.10.	How is U.S. influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	180	36	73	71
2.	**Perceptions of the EU in Armenian public discourse**				
2.1.	How is the EU's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	221	107	75	39
2.2.	How is the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) portrayed?	92	57	20	15
2.3.	How is EU policy toward Armenia portrayed?	824	427	227	170
2.4.	How is EU policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	96	8	51	37
2.5.	How is EU policy toward Georgia portrayed?	62	10	27	25
2.6.	How is EU policy toward the United States portrayed?	62	17	9	36
2.7.	How is EU policy toward Russia portrayed?	227	3	170	54
2.8.	How is EU policy toward Turkey portrayed?	48	8	14	26
2.9.	How is EU influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	268	78	115	75
3.	**Perceptions of Russia in Armenian public discourse**				
3.1.	How is Russia's role in ensuring Armenia's security portrayed?	437	93	268	76
3.2.	How is Russia's influence on Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	269	49	150	70
3.3.	How is Russian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	1024	118	561	345
3.4.	How is Russian policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	112	10	52	50
3.5.	How is Russian policy toward Georgia portrayed?	50	5	29	16
3.6.	How is Russian policy toward Turkey portrayed?	61	5	27	29
3.7.	How is Russian policy toward the EU portrayed?	153	0	113	40

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	+
3.8.	How is Russian policy toward the United States portrayed?	143	5	77	61
3.9.	How is Russian influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	515	11	354	150
3.10.	How is Russia's impact on the security environment in the South Caucasus assessed?	280	70	164	46
3.11.	How is Russia's role in reopening transport connections in the South Caucasus assessed?	194	50	84	60
4.	**Perceptions of Turkey in Armenian public discourse**				
4.1.	How is Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	285	26	193	66
4.2.	How is Turkey's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	441	50	267	124
5.	**Perceptions of Iran in Armenian public discourse**				
5.1.	How is Iran's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	102	50	3	49
5.2.	How is Iranian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	298	157	4	137
6.	**Perceptions of Georgia in Armenian public discourse**				
6.1.	How is Georgia's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	36	10	2	24
6.2.	How is Georgia's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	150	46	11	93

As the consolidated media monitoring table shows, the role of the Russian Federation in issues of relevance to Armenia received the most extensive coverage. The United States ranked second in terms of coverage intensity, followed by the European Union. In the cases of Russia and the EU, the greatest attention was devoted to their policies towards Armenia, while in the case of the United States, coverage focused primarily on its policy towards Iran.

Across all 11 topics defined for this section of the monitoring, Russia's role was assessed negatively far more often than positively. By contrast, when all topics are considered together, positive references to the United States and the European Union outnumbered negative ones. This does not, however, mean that the balance of assessments was positive for each individual topic.

In particular, during May-July 2026, US policy towards Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Russia and the EU received negative assessments more frequently than positive ones. EU policies towards the aforementioned countries were also predominantly assessed critically. At the same time, EU policy towards the United States received more positive than negative coverage. The influence of both the United States and the EU on Armenia's parliamentary elections was likewise subject to more frequent critical assessments.

The roles of the other countries covered by the monitoring attracted substantially less attention. Positive references to Iran and Georgia outnumbered negative ones, while the opposite was true for Turkey.

References by Conditionally Pro-Government Media Outlets and Experts

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	+
1.	**Perceptions of the United States in Armenian public discourse**				
1.1.	How is the U.S. role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	232	153	30	49
1.2.	How is the Trump Route / TRIPP project portrayed?	218	162	9	47
1.3.	How is U.S. policy toward Armenia portrayed?	260	191	14	55
1.4.	How is U.S. policy toward Iran portrayed?	212	31	82	99
1.5.	How is U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	47	11	20	16
1.6.	How is U.S. policy toward Georgia portrayed?	9	6	0	3
1.7.	How is U.S. policy toward Turkey portrayed?	22	3	1	18
1.8.	How is U.S. policy toward Russia portrayed?	90	6	26	58
1.9.	How is U.S. policy toward the EU portrayed?	65	17	22	26
1.10.	How is U.S. influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	80	24	10	46
2.	**Perceptions of the EU in Armenian public discourse**				
2.1.	How is the EU's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	120	100	2	18
2.2.	How is the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) portrayed?	57	48	0	9
2.3.	How is EU policy toward Armenia portrayed?	483	396	17	70
2.4.	How is EU policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	40	6	12	22
2.5.	How is EU policy toward Georgia portrayed?	22	4	4	14
2.6.	How is EU policy toward the United States portrayed?	40	15	4	21
2.7.	How is EU policy toward Russia portrayed?	110	5	66	39
2.8.	How is EU policy toward Turkey portrayed?	23	6	3	14
2.9.	How is EU influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	116	59	6	51
3.	**Perceptions of Russia in Armenian public discourse**				
3.1.	How is Russia's role in ensuring Armenia's security portrayed?	279	8	256	15
3.2.	How is Russia's influence on Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	196	14	160	22
3.3.	How is Russian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	660	31	537	92
3.4.	How is Russian policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	82	7	52	23
3.5.	How is Russian policy toward Georgia portrayed?	25	1	20	4
3.6.	How is Russian policy toward Turkey portrayed?	37	4	21	12
3.7.	How is Russian policy toward the EU portrayed?	97	0	81	16
3.8.	How is Russian policy toward the United States portrayed?	90	4	58	28
3.9.	How is Russian influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	431	4	383	44
3.10.	How is Russia's impact on the security environment in the South Caucasus assessed?	166	4	148	14

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	+
3.11.	How is Russia's role in reopening transport connections in the South Caucasus assessed?	115	13	75	27
4.	**Perceptions of Turkey in Armenian public discourse**				
4.1.	How is Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	109	23	29	57
4.2.	How is Turkey's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	160	45	39	76
5.	**Perceptions of Iran in Armenian public discourse**				
5.1.	How is Iran's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	38	16	2	20
5.2.	How is Iranian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	141	71	2	68
6.	**Perceptions of Georgia in Armenian public discourse**				
6.1.	How is Georgia's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	28	10	2	16
6.2.	How is Georgia's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	84	37	3	44

References by Conditionally Opposition-Oriented Media Outlets and Experts

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	0
1.	**Perceptions of the United States in Armenian public discourse**				
1.1.	How is the U.S. role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	83	16	39	28
1.2.	How is the Trump Route / TRIPP project portrayed?	161	7	116	38
1.3.	How is U.S. policy toward Armenia portrayed?	179	40	96	43
1.4.	How is U.S. policy toward Iran portrayed?	225	2	142	81
1.5.	How is U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	42	3	23	16
1.6.	How is U.S. policy toward Georgia portrayed?	7	0	6	1
1.7.	How is U.S. policy toward Turkey portrayed?	42	3	19	20
1.8.	How is U.S. policy toward Russia portrayed?	101	1	56	44
1.9.	How is U.S. policy toward the EU portrayed?	35	2	14	19
1.10.	How is U.S. influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	74	2	55	17
2.	**Perceptions of the EU in Armenian public discourse**				
2.1.	How is the EU's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	102	10	70	22
2.2.	How is the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) portrayed?	28	2	18	8
2.3.	How is EU policy toward Armenia portrayed?	291	21	198	72
2.4.	How is EU policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	56	6	40	10
2.5.	How is EU policy toward Georgia portrayed?	31	0	22	9
2.6.	How is EU policy toward the United States portrayed?	24	1	5	18
2.7.	How is EU policy toward Russia portrayed?	118	0	102	16
2.8.	How is EU policy toward Turkey portrayed?	29	1	13	15
2.9.	How is EU influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	130	2	109	19
3.	**Perceptions of Russia in Armenian public discourse**				
3.1.	How is Russia's role in ensuring Armenia's security portrayed?	163	71	40	52
3.2.	How is Russia's influence on Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	96	32	26	38
3.3.	How is Russian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	393	71	86	236
3.4.	How is Russian policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	37	2	14	21
3.5.	How is Russian policy toward Georgia portrayed?	24	3	5	16
3.6.	How is Russian policy toward Turkey portrayed?	21	1	5	15
3.7.	How is Russian policy toward the EU portrayed?	51	0	28	23
3.8.	How is Russian policy toward the United States portrayed?	49	1	20	28
3.9.	How is Russian influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	130	6	28	96
3.10.	How is Russia's impact on the security environment in the South Caucasus assessed?	104	62	18	24
3.11.	How is Russia's role in reopening transport connections in the South Caucasus assessed?	84	35	19	30

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	0
4.	**Perceptions of Turkey in Armenian public discourse**				
4.1.	How is Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	181	1	171	9
4.2.	How is Turkey's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	252	1	220	31
5.	**Perceptions of Iran in Armenian public discourse**				
5.1.	How is Iran's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	61	36	3	22
5.2.	How is Iranian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	152	80	2	70
6.	**Perceptions of Georgia in Armenian public discourse**				
6.1.	How is Georgia's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	4	1	0	3
6.2.	How is Georgia's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	56	12	3	41

References by Conditionally Neutral Media Outlets and Experts

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	+
1.	**Perceptions of the United States in Armenian public discourse**				
1.1.	How is the U.S. role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	96	60	4	32
1.2.	How is the Trump Route / TRIPP project portrayed?	154	82	11	61
1.3.	How is U.S. policy toward Armenia portrayed?	148	104	10	34
1.4.	How is U.S. policy toward Iran portrayed?	144	3	54	87
1.5.	How is U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	28	4	2	22
1.6.	How is U.S. policy toward Georgia portrayed?	7	0	1	6
1.7.	How is U.S. policy toward Turkey portrayed?	15	4	1	10
1.8.	How is U.S. policy toward Russia portrayed?	42	1	9	32
1.9.	How is U.S. policy toward the EU portrayed?	25	5	10	10
1.10.	How is U.S. influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	53	21	10	22
2.	**Perceptions of the EU in Armenian public discourse**				
2.1.	How is the EU's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	78	46	9	23
2.2.	How is the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) portrayed?	40	31	3	6
2.3.	How is EU policy toward Armenia portrayed?	315	205	31	79
2.4.	How is EU policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	29	2	10	17
2.5.	How is EU policy toward Georgia portrayed?	23	7	5	11
2.6.	How is EU policy toward the United States portrayed?	14	4	2	8
2.7.	How is EU policy toward Russia portrayed?	32	1	17	14
2.8.	How is EU policy toward Turkey portrayed?	8	1	0	7
2.9.	How is EU influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	75	39	18	18
3.	**Perceptions of Russia in Armenian public discourse**				
3.1.	How is Russia's role in ensuring Armenia's security portrayed?	203	14	174	15
3.2.	How is Russia's influence on Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	160	3	136	21
3.3.	How is Russian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	436	17	349	70
3.4.	How is Russian policy toward Azerbaijan portrayed?	58	4	34	20
3.5.	How is Russian policy toward Georgia portrayed?	30	1	22	7
3.6.	How is Russian policy toward Turkey portrayed?	28	0	19	9
3.7.	How is Russian policy toward the EU portrayed?	43	0	36	7
3.8.	How is Russian policy toward the United States portrayed?	25	0	14	11
3.9.	How is Russian influence on Armenia's National Assembly elections portrayed?	260	1	230	29
3.10.	How is Russia's impact on the security environment in the South Caucasus assessed?	144	4	127	13
3.11.	How is Russia's role in reopening transport connections in the South Caucasus assessed?	106	3	89	14

Themes		Total number of references	Tone of the references		
			+	-	+
4.	**Perceptions of Turkey in Armenian public discourse**				
4.1.	How is Turkey's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	78	4	45	29
4.2.	How is Turkey's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	170	12	72	86
5.	**Perceptions of Iran in Armenian public discourse**				
5.1.	How is Iran's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	33	7	0	26
5.2.	How is Iranian policy toward Armenia portrayed?	105	52	4	49
6.	**Perceptions of Georgia in Armenian public discourse**				
6.1.	How is Georgia's role in Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization portrayed?	13	1	0	12
6.2.	How is Georgia's policy toward Armenia portrayed?	70	20	9	41

The three tables presented above incorporate not only media monitoring data but also opinions expressed in social media posts by opinion leaders (influencers).

As the tables clearly demonstrate, assessments of the roles of the United States and the European Union by media outlets and influencers conditionally classified as pro-government and opposition are diametrically opposed. In the former segment, assessments are overwhelmingly positive, while in the latter they are predominantly negative.

The two segments of Armenia's information space also differ substantially in their attitudes towards Russia. Pro-government media outlets and influencers assess Moscow's role in all issues of relevance to Armenia in strongly negative terms, whereas in the opposition segment, positive and negative references to Russia are approximately equal in number.

As noted above, the other three countries covered by the monitoring of media outlets and influencers' social media posts received considerably less attention. Notably, in assessments of Türkiye's role, the positions of the pro-government and opposition segments are reversed compared with their assessments of Russia. In the pro-government segment, positive and negative references are approximately balanced, whereas in the opposition segment, negative assessments overwhelmingly predominate.

These findings provide further evidence of the sharp polarization of political perceptions within Armenian society. At the same time, the positions of the two opposing segments broadly converge in their positive assessments of the roles of Iran and Georgia in issues of relevance to Armenia.

As for the conditionally neutral segment, opinions expressed here concerning the policies of Russia, the United States and the European Union are considerably closer to those of the pro-government segment, while assessments of Turkey's role are more closely aligned with those of the opposition segment.



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